



AND

FRIDAY, MAY 29, 1815.

VOL. XV.

No. 817.

AN EXPOSITION OF THE CAUSES AND CHARACTER OF THE LATE WAR WITH G. BRITAIN.

Hence, when early intimations were given from Halifax and from Canada, of a disposition, on the part of the British authorities to enter into an armistice, the power of those authorities was so doubtful, the objects of the armistice were so limited, and the immediate advantages of the measure were so entirely on the side of the enemy, that the American government could not consistently with its duty, embrace the propositions. But some hope of an amicable adjustment was inspired, when a communication from Admiral Warren, in September 1812, stating that he was commanded by his government, to propose, on the one hand, that the government of the United States should, instantly, recall their letters of marque and reprisal against British ships, together with all orders and instructions for any acts of hostility whatever against the territories of his majesty, or the persons and property of his subjects; and to promise, on the other hand, if the American government acquiesced in the preceding proposition, that instructions should be issued to the British squadrons, to discontinue hostilities against the United States and their citizens. This overture, however, was subject to a further qualification, that should the American government accede to the proposal for terminating hostilities, the British admiral was authorized to arrange with the American government, as to the revocation of the laws, which interdict the commerce and ships of war of Great Britain from the harbors and waters of the United States; but that in default of such revocation, within a reasonable period to be agreed upon, the orders in council would be revived. The American government at once, expressed a disposition to embrace the general proposition for a cessation of hostilities, with a view to negotiation, declared that no peace could be durable, unless the essential object of impressment was adjusted; and offered as the basis of the adjustment, to prohibit the employment of British subjects in the naval or commercial service of the United States; but adhering to its determination of obtaining a relief from actual sufferance, the suspension of the practice of impressment, pending the proposed armistice, was deemed a necessary consequence; for it could not be presumed, while the parties were engaged in a negotiation to adjust amicably this important difference, that the United States would admit the right or acquiesce in the practice, of the opposite party; or that Great Britain would be willing to restrain her cruisers from a practice, which would have the strongest effect to defeat the negotiation. So just, so reasonable, so indispensable, a preliminary, without which the citizens of the United States, navigating the high seas, would not be placed, by the armistice, on an equal footing with the subjects of Great Britain, admiral Warren was not authorized to accept; and no effort at an amicable adjustment, through that channel, was necessarily abortive. But long before the overture of the British admiral was made (a few days indeed, after the declaration of war) the reluctance with which the United States had resorted to arms, was manifested by the steps taken to arrest the progress of hostilities, to hasten a restoration of peace. On the 26th of June, 1812, the American charge

affaires, at London, was instructed to make the proposal of an armistice to the British government, which might lead to an adjustment of all differences, on the single condition, in the event of the orders in council being repealed, that instructions should be issued, suspending the practice of impressment during the armistice. This proposal was soon followed by another, admitting, instead of positive instructions, an informal understanding between the two governments on the subject. Both of these proposals were unhappily rejected. And when a third, which seemed to have no plea for hesitation, as it required no other preliminary than that the American minister at London should find in the British government a sincere disposition to accommodate the difference, relative to impressment, on fair conditions, was evaded, it was obvious that neither a desire of peace, nor a spirit of conciliation, influenced the councils of Great Britain.

Under these circumstances the American government had no choice, but to invigorate the war; and yet it has never lost sight of the object of all just wars, a just peace. The emperor of Russia having offered his mediation to accomplish that object, it was instantly and cordially accepted by the American government; but it was peremptorily rejected by the British government. The emperor, in his benevolence, repeated his invitation; the British government again rejected it. At last, however, Great Britain, sensible of the reproach, to which such conduct would expose her throughout Europe, offered to the American government a direct negotiation for peace, and the offer was promptly embraced; with perfect confidence, that the British government would be equally prompt in giving effect to its own proposal. But such was not the design, or the course of that government. The American envoys were immediately appointed, and arrived at Gottenburgh, the destined scene of negotiation, on the 11th of April, 1814, as soon as the season admitted. The British government, though regularly informed, that no time would be lost, on the part of the United States, suspended the appointment of its envoys, until the actual arrival of the American envoys, should be formally communicated. This pretension, however novel and insuspicious, was not permitted to obstruct the path of peace. The British government next proposed to transfer the negotiation from Gottenburgh to Ghent. This change, also, notwithstanding the necessary delay, was allowed. The American envoys arriving at Ghent on the 24th of June, remained in a mortifying state of suspense and expectation for the arrival of the British envoys, until the 6th of August. And from the period of opening the negotiations, to the date of the last despatch of the 31st of October, it has been seen that the whole of the diplomatic skill of the British government, has consisted in consuming time, without approaching any conclusion. The pacification of Paris had suddenly and unexpectedly placed at the disposal of the British government a great naval and military force; the pride and passions of the nation were ardently excited against the United States; and a war of desperate and barbarous character was planned, at the very moment that the American government, finding its maritime citizens relieved, by the course of events, from actual sufferance, under the practice of impressment, had authorized its envoys to waive those stipulations upon the subject, which might otherwise have been indispensable precautions.

Hitherto the American government

See the letters from the department of state to Mr. Russell, dated the 5th and 10th of August, 1812, and Mr. G. Mason's memorandum of a conversation with Mr. Baker, the British secretary of legation, enclosed in the last letter. See also Mr. Monroe's letter to Mr. Russell, dated the 21st Aug. 1812. See the letter of admiral Warren to the secretary of state, dated at Halifax, the 20th of September, 1812. See the letter of Mr. Monroe to admiral Cochrane, dated the 27th Oct. 1812.

See the correspondence between Mr. Russell and lord Castlereagh, dated August and September, 1812—and Mr. Russell's letters to the secretary of state, dated September 1812. See the correspondence between Mr. Monroe and Mr. Danchikoff, in March, 1813.

has shewn the justice of its cause; its respect for the rights of other nations; and its inherent love of peace. But the scenes of war will also exhibit a striking contrast, between the conduct of the U. States, and the conduct of G. Britain. The same insidious policy which taught the Prince Regent to describe the American government as the aggressor in the war, has induced the British government (clouding the daylight truth of the transaction) to call the atrocities of the British fleets and armies, a retaliation upon the example of the American troops in Canada. The U. States tender a solemn appeal to the civilized world, against the fabrication of such a charge; and they vouch, in support of their appeal, the known morals, habits and pursuits of their people; the character of their civil and political institutions; and the whole career of their navy and their army, as humane as it is brave. Upon what pretext did the British admiral, on the 16th of August 1814, announce his determination, 'to destroy and lay waste such towns and districts upon the coast as might be found assailable?' It was the pretext of a request from the governor general of the Canadas, for aid to carry into effect measures of retaliation; while, in fact, the barbarous nature of the war had been deliberately settled and prescribed by the British cabinet. What could have been the foundation of such a request? The outrages, and the irregularities, which too often occur during a state of national hostilities, in violation of the laws of civilized warfare, are always to be lamented, disavowed, and repaired, by a just & honorable government; but if disavowal be made, and if reparation be offered, there is no foundation for retaliatory violence. 'Whatever unauthorized irregularity may have been committed by any of the troops of the United States, the American government has been ready, upon principles of sacred and eternal obligation, to disavow, and as far as it might be practicable to repair.' In every known instance (and they are few) the offenders have been subjected to the regular investigation of a military tribunal; and an officer commanding a party of stragglers, who were guilty of unworthy excesses, was immediately dismissed without the form of a trial, for not preventing those excesses. The destruction of the village of Newark, adjacent to Fort George, on the 10th of December, 1813, was long subsequent to the pillage and conflagration committed on the shores of the Chesapeake, throughout the summer of the same year; & might fairly have been alleged as a retaliation for those outrages; but, in fact, it was justified by the American commander who ordered it, on the ground, that it became necessary to the military operations at that place; while the American government, as soon as it heard of the act on the 6th of January, 1814, instructed the general commanding the northern army, 'to disavow the conduct of the officer who committed it, and to transmit to Gov. Prevost, a copy of the order under color of which that officer had acted.' This disavowal was accordingly communicated; and on the 10th of Feb. 1814, Governor Prevost answered, 'that it had been with great satisfaction, he had received the assurance, that the perpetration of the burning of the town of Newark, was both unauthorized by the American government, and abhorrent to every American feeling; that if any outrages had ensued the wanton and unjustifiable destruction of Newark, passing the bounds of just retaliation, they were

to be attributed to the influence of irritated passions, on the part of the unfortunate sufferers by that event, which, in a state of active warfare, it has not been possible altogether to restrain; and that it was as little congenial to the disposition of his majesty's government, as it was to that of the government of the United States, deliberately to adopt any plan of policy, which had for its object the devastation of private property.' But the disavowal of the American government was not the only expiation of the offence committed by this officer; for the British government assumed the province of redress in the indulgence of its own vengeance. A few days after the burning of Newark, the British and Indian troops crossed the Niagara for this purpose; they surprized and seized Fort Niagara, and put its garrison to the sword; they burnt the villages of Lewistown, Manchester, Tuacarora, Buffalo, and Black Rock; slaughtering the unarmed inhabitants, until, in short they had laid waste the whole of the Niagara frontier, levelling every house and every hut, & dispersing, beyond the means of shelter, in the extremity of the winter, the male and the female, the old the young, Sir George Prevost himself appears to have been sated with the ruin & the havoc which had been thus inflicted. In his proclamation of the 12th of January, 1814, he emphatically declared, that for the burning of Newark, 'the opportunity of punishment had occurred, and a full measure of retaliation had taken place; and that it was not his intention to pursue further a system of warfare, so revolting to his own feelings, and so little congenial to the British character, unless the future measures of the enemy should compel him again to resort to it.' Nay with his answer to the American general, already mentioned, he transmitted a copy of that proclamation, as expressive of the determination as to his future line of conduct; and added, 'that he was happy to learn that there was no probability that any measures on the part of the American government would oblige him to depart from it.' Where, then, shall we search for the foundation of the call upon the British admiral, to aid the governor of Canada in measures of retaliation? Great Britain forgot the principle of retaliation, when her orders in council were issued against the unoffending neutral, in resentment of outrages committed by her enemy; and surely, she had again forgotten the same principle when she threatened an unceasing violation of the laws of civilized warfare, in retaliation for injuries which never existed, or which the American government had explicitly disavowed, or which had been already avenged by her own arms in a manner and a degree cruel and unparalleled. The American government, after all, has not hesitated to declare, that 'for the reparation of injuries, of whatever nature they may be, not sanctioned by the law of nations, which the military or naval force of either power might have committed against the other, it would always be ready to enter into reciprocal arrangements; presuming that the British government would neither expect, nor propose any which were not reciprocal.'

See admiral Cochrane's letter to Mr. Monroe, dated the 18th of August, 1814, and Mr. Monroe's answer to the 6th of Sep. 1814. See the letter from the Secretary at War to brigadier general M'Lure, dated the 4th of October, 1813. See Gen. M'Lure's letters to the Secretary of War, dated Dec. 10 and 15, 1813. See the letter from the Secretary of War, to major-general Wilkinson, dated the 26th of January, 1814.

with the usages of civilized nations. as a warfare, that, disclaiming all moral influence, inflicts an outrage upon social order, and gives a shock to the elements of humanity. All belligerent nations can form alliances with the savage, the African, and the blood-thirsty; but what civilized nations has selected these auxiliaries, in its hostilities? It does not require the fleets and armies of Great Britain to lay waste an open country; to burn unfortified towns, or unprotected villages; nor to plunder the merchant, the farmer, and the planter, of his stores—these exploits may easily be achieved by a single cruiser, or a petty privateer; but when have such exploits been performed on the coasts of the continent of Europe or of the British islands, by the naval and military force of any belligerent power; or when have they been tolerated by any honorable government, as the predatory enterprise of armed individuals? Nor, is the destruction of the public edifices, which adorn the metropolis of a country, and serve to commemorate the taste and science of the age, beyond the sphere of action of the vilest incendiary, as well as of the most triumphant conqueror. It cannot be forgotten, indeed, that in the course of ten years past, the capital of the principal powers of Europe have been conquered, and occupied alternately, by the victorious armies of each other; and yet there has been no instance of a conflagration of the palaces, the temples or the halls of justice. No such examples have proceeded from Great Britain alone; a nation so devoted in its pride; so awful in its power; and so affected in its tenderness for the liberties of mankind! The charge is severe; but let the facts be adduced.

It is now, however, proper to examine the character of the warfare, which Great Britain waged against the United States. In Europe, it has already been marked, with astonishment and indignation, as a warfare of the tomahawk, the scalping knife and the torch; as a warfare incompatible

See the letter of major general Wilkinson to Sir George Prevost, dated the 28th of January 1814, and the answer of Sir George Prevost, on the 10th of Feb. 1814. See Sir George Prevost's proclamation, dated at Quebec the 12th of January, 1814. See the Letter of Sir George Prevost to Gen. Wilkinson, dated the 10th of February 1814; and the British general orders of the 22d of February, 1814. See Mr. Monroe's letter to admiral Cochrane, dated the 6th of September, 1814.

1. Great Britain has violated the principles of social law, by insidiously attempting to excite the citizens of the United States into acts of contumacy, treason and revolt, against their government. For instance: No sooner had the American government imposed the restrictive system upon its citizens, to escape from the rage and the depredation of the belligerent power, than the British government, then professing amity towards the United States, issued an order, which was, in effect, an invitation to the American citizens to break the laws of their country, under a public promise of British protection and patronage, to all vessels which should engage in an illicit trade, without bearing the customary ship's documents and papers.

Again: During a period of peace, between the United States and Great Britain, in the year 1809, the Governor General of the Canadas employed an agent (who had previously been engaged in a similar service, with the knowledge and approbation of the British cabinet) "on a secret and confidential mission," into the United States, declaring, "that there was no doubt, that his able execution of such a mission, would give him a claim, not only on the Governor General, but on his majesty's ministers." The object of the mission, was to ascertain whether there existed a disposition in any portion of the citizens, "to bring about a separation of the eastern states from the general union; and how far in such an event, they would look up to England for assistance, or be disposed to enter into a connexion with her." The agent was instructed "to insinuate, that if any of the citizens should wish to enter into a communication with the British government, through the Governor General, he was authorized to receive such communication; and that he would safely transmit it to the Governor General." He was accredited by a formal instrument, under the seal and signature of the Governor General.

See Mr. Monroe's letter to admiral Cochrane, dated the 6th of Sept. 1814.

See the instructions to the commanders of British ships of war and privateers, dated the 11th of April, 1813.

See the letter from Mr. L. Fund, the secretary of the governor general, to Mr. Henry, dated the 26th of January, 1809.